LEVERAGING SOF CAPACITY:
FUSING COMPONENTS, TSOCS, AND ACADEMICS

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"Humans are more important than hardware." — *SOF Truth*

The Problem

In Army special operations, our greatest investments and resources are arguably our people as opposed to technology, platforms or systems. These people provide our various commands capability through their capacity to learn, train, analyze, plan and lead our forces globally. While our capability is almost certainly unmatched, our capacity is finite. Our force's capacity is limited by literally the hours in a day and the tasks we are pitted against. Our enemy is not only the shifting non-state actors, or nimble terrorist networks, it is often time itself. It is the proverbial axiom of 150 pounds being shoved in a 100-pound rucksack. Whether SOF personnel are assigned to a component command or belong to a theater special operations command, we try to perform a myriad of tasks ranging from routine training events, conducting inventory inspections, participating in staff briefings, analyzing plans, providing feedback to policy and doctrine, conducting mission analysis, preparing for deployment and at the same time, trying to balance a personal life — and that is while we are not actively deployed.

Given the increasing demands placed on SOF, its most limiting factor is almost unquestionably time. This constraint is understood at all levels of command and was recently highlighted by Admiral Bill McRaven, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, in 2012 when he identified a "…demanding operational tempo" (McRaven, USSOCOM Posture Statement 2012) as one of the two major stressors to the force. Reinforcing the message, the USSOCOM Command Sergeant Major Chris Faris, stated in a *USA Today* article, that even with large ground-combat operations winding down, SOF will be "…expected to continue playing a crucial role, fighting at a high tempo" (Zoroya 2012). Therefore, with inadequate time to commit our finite capacity to conduct quality detailed planning and mission analysis, why are we ignoring our greatest untouched reservoir of strength — the untouched capacity of people?

Background

While the Department of Defense has multiple venues and settings for professional military education, this article will focus on the Naval Postgraduate School, and more specifically, the Defense Analysis Department. The Direct Action Department is unique in that it is a joint SOF institution heavily focused on the irregular-warfare environment. This 18-24 month program, founded in 1992 by Dr. Gordon McCormick and then-Commander Bill McRaven, was designed to "…develop critical thinkers and capable operators, planners and commanders for the rigors of irregular warfare" (Naval Postgraduate School 2013). Today, Professor Dr. John Arquilla, the department chair, describes the DA mission as "…to arm select U.S. military professionals with the critical thinking skills and specialized knowledge that they will need for waging and prevailing in the complex conflicts under way — and those to come."

A unique feature to this duty, in stark contrast to a USSOCOM component or Theater Special Operations Command assignment, is that personnel have the time to read, think and plan. Combined with routine access to SIPR, JWICs and JIANT, state-of-the art analytical tools, recognized subject-matter experts and proven operational practitioners, the NPS students have an unparalleled opportunity for rigorous operational research. One example of the analytical tools available would be the Common Operational Research Environmental Laboratory. The CORE lab "…prepares military officers to return to the force armed with the ability to apply advanced analytical technologies and theories to real-world situations, as well as articulate the appropriate requirements and manage similar efforts for the warfighter."

Probably for the first time in a SOF career, the service member has academic instruction, capability and capacity to effectively analyze and plan. What the NPS student lacks is routine access to prioritized "real-world" operational missions and relevant force data to plan future operations, activi-

ties and programs. In other words, what the students learn and acquire at NPS is not fully aligned or synchronized with the planning needs of operational missions. It is this juxtaposition of capability and capacity that this article highlights the creation of the NPS UW Fusion Cell to build a nexus between the components, the TSOCs and NPS.

Concept

As depicted in Figure 1, the UW Fusion Cell will serve as an intellectual catalyst; strengthening the relationship between component, TSOC and NPS without fundamentally altering any entity of this three-sided equation. Each partner in this intellectual equation brings its own specific skill sets and operational requirements to the fusion cell to combine them in ways each organization could not do. The component brings to the table, true force capabilities and readiness issues, while the TSOC holds the real-world operational realities and requirements; NPS has the analytical capability and capacity to coordinate the two conditions into a seamless product that all sides can readily consume. The end result is building a more agile, flexible and robust entity, capable of confronting the challenges faced by the TSOC or component. In order to make the fusion cell a functioning entity, several key things have to occur.

First, designated project officers from each of the components, TSOCs and NPS have been identified and empowered to speak and work actions on behalf of their commands. The forum for discussion would likely be a quarterly meeting conducted in person at NPS. Additionally, the project officers would need to have some level of operational flexibility to travel in order to work around one of the major constraints NPS has: the student course schedule. While face-to-face coordination is the most desirable and useful form of communication, VTCs and emails can be used to conduct in-progress reviews or course corrections. Ultimately, the project officer would need to have some level of continuity to be able to see the various tasks through to the end to prevent project drift or creep.

Second, a synchronization point would have to be designated; a likely candidate would be the SOF chair at NPS. While the fusion cell will not likely require a traditional "line-and-block chart" to articulate authority, resources and requirements will need to be balanced. The SOF chair is occupied by an active-duty SOF O6, designated by USSOCOM, who could provide coordination and deconfliction between the components, TSOCs and the academic facilities. Furthermore, the SOF Chair would also have the insight as to which projects would be able to be synchronized with relevant academic courses. Furthermore, the USSOCOM representation theoretically provides the group a neutral point of view, favoring any component or any TSOC.

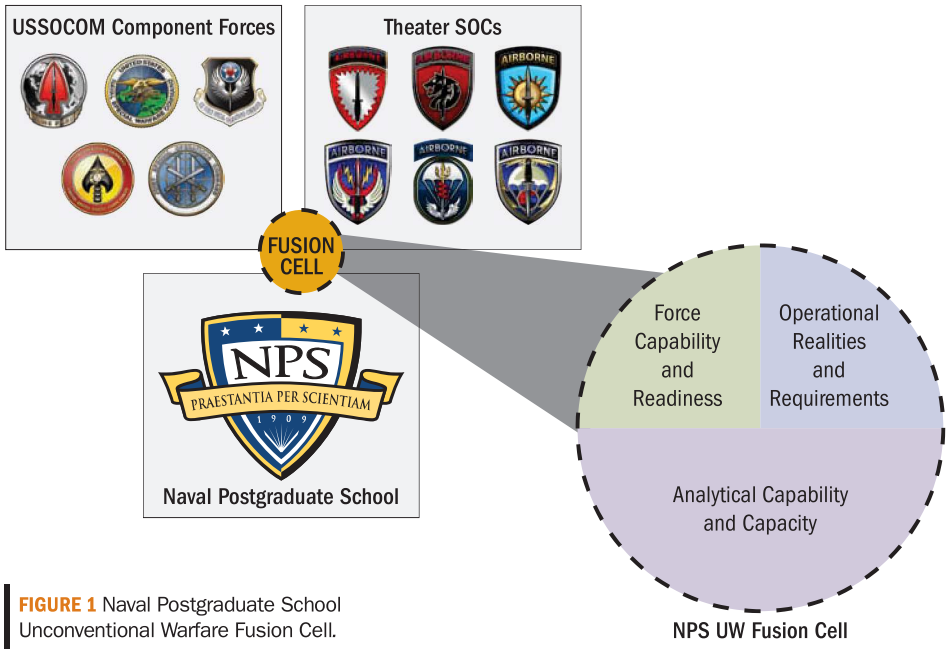

FIGURE 1 Naval Postgraduate School Unconventional Warfare Fusion Cell.

Finally, clear and concise proposals would have to be scoped in a collaborative and cooperative manner between all parties prior to start to ensure, academic goals were met and customer expectations were managed. It also needs to be understood that not every project will be able to be answered. The time constraints will range from a short three-month analytical analysis to a two-year capstone project.

Micro Modeling

While the above concept is in the early stages of implementation, experimental micro-modeling has occurred successfully in several ad-hoc venues. Currently, there exists a collaborative effort between NPS and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Unconventional Warfare Operational Design Course and the Unconventional Warfare Network Design Course with material and limited instructor exchanges. A few instructors from NPS have also participated in UW mobile training teams organized by the USAJFKSWCS empowering Special Forces groups with regional focus. At the same time, student feedback from the UWODC and UWNDC has helped the DA Department refine its courses on UW.

Another example has occurred between the USASOC G3X, the Warrant Officer Institute and the Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate, formerly known as Directorate of Training and Doctrine. As a matter of routine, several key field manuals, a security-classification guide and USSOCOM directives were put into staffing at the ARSOF level. Each of the publications dealt with complex subjects, interrelated topics, consisting of multiple lengthy chapters and nearly all written in a classified venue — all of which make this sort of detailed analysis difficult by the various component service commands under the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

The Special Forces Warrant Officer Advanced Course is a 10-week PME located at Fort Bragg, N.C. The course prepares company-grade warrant officers for duties of increasing responsibility after serving on a Special Forces operational detachment-alpha. Students spend the course perfecting five competencies: unconventional warfare, operations/intelligence fusion, planning, training management and operating in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment. It was the operations/intelligence fusion, planning and training management analysis that sparked the original concept: If students are required to write, could that analysis be coordinated and synchronized with existing analytical requirements? On an informal basis, coordinated between the commandant of the Warrant Officer Institute and the USASOC G3X, the SFWOAC incorporated these routine reviews

of the documents and policies identified above into their course materials as a class project. This informal coordination ultimately resulted in no less than three field manuals, two USSOCOM directives and a security class guide reviewed by a cross sample of company-grade Special Forces warrant officers.

The feedback received by the CDID was insightful and accurate, due in large part to the students having the time to actually break down and digest, question and review the materials in a methodical manner. The average SFWOAC consists of 20-24 students, from across the Special Forces Regiment, each of whom spent an hour a day for four weeks working on the review. The cumulative man hours from the class easily exceeded 480 hours of analysis.

Advantages and Disadvantages

A more mature and robust fusion cell has several obvious advantages. First, NPS offers a good representative cross sampling of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine SOF of various MOSs, regional affiliations and operational experiences. This will provide the TSOCs and the components a diverse level of experiences upon which to draw. Second, the introduction of real-world operational requirements or component readiness issues provides tangible data for NPS students and faculty to manipulate and analyze, with state-of-the-art analytics, as opposed to working with canned data. Third, by leveraging NPS analytical capacity, the components and TSOCs will actually be able to have important or complex problem sets worked on more closely by dedicated personnel that are now freed up from the routine distractions of operational assignments. Fourth, by doing the analysis and spending time with the problem sets, students will develop an authentic subject-matter expertise that, with the appropriate talent management, will bring genuine credibility to the next assignment; TSOC or component. Finally, with today's constrained budgets and monetary concerns, the proposal is essentially free, aside from some minor TDY. At its core, the fusion cell simply leverages existing capacity, and utilizes project officers to scope and monitor various projects under the tutelage of world-class academics.

As with any new effort, certain disadvantages should be noted. First, as referenced above, NPS is a PME that is designed to educate SOF leaders for future assignments. The curriculum cannot be redirected to support component or TSOC projects alone. The intent is to find synergy where it is applicable and leverage it where possible. Second, while NPS does offer a good cross sampling of SOF expertise, not all classes are equal. Third, because this fusion cell will operate in the gaps and seams between NPS, the components and the TSOCs it will require a cooperative and collaborative approach as opposed to a traditional military hierarchy. Fourth, it needs to be understood by the customer that while NPS facilities, staff and students are producing world-class academic instruction and analysis, final project fidelity will need to be managed by the project officer.

The Future

The evolutionary phase of growing the UW Fusion Cell is to develop a small pilot project between one or two TSOCs, components and NPS to prototype the fusion cell process with the focus on an existing operational problem sets being paired with current curriculum. For instance, pairing the current requirement by a selected TSOC, with a national priority, to develop specific UW campaign plans and synchronizing this project with NPS's courses. During this pilot project it will be important to establish ground rules and project scopes to set expectations and conditions for success on all sides. The goal should be to build habitual, programmatic, elastic and systematic relationships between Naval Postgraduate School, the TSOCs and the USSOCOM component commands.

Conclusion

In the March 2013 USSOCOM posture statement, Adm. McRaven noted "the goal is to increase capacity and capabilities of the TSOC and their assigned forces to the GCCs to conduct full spectrum special operations." (McRaven, USSOCOM Posture Statement 2013). If humans are SOFs most important resource, the community should look for ways to leverage that advantage where ever it exists. As demonstrated in the micro model, the concept works. The intent of the fusion cell is not to shrug off responsibility, or transfer the preponderance of staff analysis every command requires, but rather to balance the analytical capacity of the force.

The endstate of the fusion cell is a cooperative and collaborative group of academics, students and operational planners working in a synergistic manner, leveraging state-of-the art analytics, facilities and subject-matter expertise focused against a common set of problems that affect the entire SOF community. **SW**

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Notes

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